

IN THE CLAIMS:

1-8 (canceled)

9. (currently amended) An apparatus for reading indicia from a remote location, comprising:

an infrared light source for providing infrared illumination;
a reflective medium disposed remotely from the infrared light source, the reflective medium including indicia operable to reflect the infrared illumination provided by the infrared light source, where portions of the infrared illumination reflected from the indicia comprise a reflected indicia image;
a light sensing device disposed remotely from the reflective medium, the light sensing device for receiving the reflected indicia image and for generating an indicia image signal based thereon;
an indicia processing system for receiving the indicia image signal and for operating on the indicia image signal to extract indicia information there from; and
a cover disposed over the indicia on the reflective medium and between the reflective medium and the light sensing device, the cover being which is transmissive to the infrared illumination and the reflected indicia image and non-transmissive to visible light, such that the indicia on the reflective medium beneath the cover are substantially undetectable to human eyesight, wherein the cover is separable and removable from the reflective medium.

10. (currently amended) An apparatus for reading indicia from a remote location, comprising:

an infrared light source for providing infrared illumination;
a reflective medium disposed remotely from the infrared light source, the reflective medium including indicia operable to reflect the infrared illumination provided by the infrared light source, where portions of the infrared illumination reflected from the indicia comprise a reflected indicia image;
a light sensing device disposed remotely from the reflective medium, the light sensing device for receiving the reflected indicia image and for generating an

indicia image signal based thereon;
an indicia processing system for receiving the indicia image signal and for operating on the indicia image signal to extract indicia information there from; and graphic components disposed over the indicia on the reflective medium and between the reflective medium and the light sensing device, the graphic components being which are transmissive to the infrared illumination and the reflected indicia image and non-transmissive to visible light, such that the indicia on the reflective medium beneath the graphic components are substantially undetectable to human eyesight, wherein the graphic components are separable and removable from the reflective medium.

11. (original) The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the graphic components comprise alphanumeric characters.

12. (original) The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the graphic components comprise a decoy bar code.

13. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the light sensing device further comprises a camera incorporating charge-coupled devices.

14. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the reflective medium is disposed at least 5 feet away from the light source and the light sensing device.

15. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9 further comprising a protective housing in which the light source and the light sensing device are disposed.

16. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the light source provides the illumination along an illumination path, the light sensing device receives the reflected indicia image along a reflected image path, and wherein an included angle between the illumination path and the reflected image path is no greater than about two degrees.

17. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9 further comprising:
the light sensing device for generating the indicia image signal as a bit-mapped image of the indicia; and

the indicia processing system for receiving the bit-mapped image and for operating on the bit-mapped image to extract the indicia information therefrom.

18. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the indicia further comprise a bar-code.

19. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the reflective medium further comprises a retro-reflective material.

20. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the light sensing device is operable to receive the reflected indicia image and generate the indicia image signal, and the indicia processing system is operable to operate on the indicia image signal to extract the indicia information as the reflective medium is moving relative to the light source and the light sensing device.

21. (original) The apparatus of claim 20 wherein the reflective medium is operable to be disposed on a motor vehicle, a railroad car, or a cargo container.

22. (canceled)

23. (currently amended) An apparatus for reading a bar code from a remote location, comprising:

a light source for providing infrared illumination from a fixed location;
a retro-reflective medium operable to be disposed on a vehicle or container which is remote from the light source and which is moveable relative to the light source, the retro-reflective medium including the bar code which is operable to reflect the infrared illumination provided by the light source, where portions of the infrared illumination reflected from the bar code comprise a reflected bar code image;
a light sensing device disposed at the fixed location remote from the retro-reflective medium for receiving the entire reflected bar code image simultaneously and for generating a bar code image signal based thereon; and
a bar code processing system for receiving the bar code image signal and for operating on the bar code image signal to extract bar code information there from as the retro-

reflective medium is moving relative to the light source and the light sensing device;
and

a cover disposed over the bar code and between the retro-reflective medium and the light sensing device, the cover being transmissive to the infrared illumination and the reflected bar code image and non-transmissive to visible light, such that the bar code on the retro-reflective medium beneath the cover is substantially undetectable to human eyesight, wherein the cover is separable and removable from the retro-reflective medium.

24. (canceled)

25. (currently amended) An apparatus for reading indicia from a remote location, comprising:

an infrared light source for providing infrared illumination;

a frame configured to surround and be separable from a vehicle license plate, the frame having at least a portion formed from material that is transmissive to infrared illumination and non-transmissive to visible light;

a reflective medium attached to the portion of the frame, the reflective medium including indicia operable to reflect the infrared illumination provided by the infrared light source, where portions of the infrared illumination reflected from the indicia comprise a reflected indicia image;

a light sensing device disposed remotely from the reflective medium, the light sensing device for receiving the reflected indicia image and for generating an indicia image signal based thereon; and

an indicia processing system for receiving the indicia image signal and for operating on the indicia image signal to extract indicia information there from.

26. (currently amended) An apparatus for reading indicia from a remote location, comprising:

an infrared light source for providing infrared illumination;

a frame configured to surround and be separable from a vehicle license plate;

a reflective medium attached to the frame, the reflective medium including indicia operable to reflect the infrared illumination provided by the infrared light source, where portions of the infrared illumination reflected from the indicia comprise a reflected indicia image;

graphic components formed of a material that is transmissive to the infrared illumination and the reflected indicia image, and non-transmissive to visible light, the graphic components attached to the frame and ~~covering the indicia so as to concealing~~ the indicia from human eyesight;

a light sensing device disposed remotely from the reflective medium, the light sensing device for receiving the reflected indicia image and for generating an indicia image signal based thereon; and

an indicia processing system for receiving the indicia image signal and for operating on the indicia image signal to extract indicia information there from.

27. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 26 wherein the indicia comprises an actual bar code and the graphic components comprise a decoy bar code.

28. (currently amended) A frame configured to surround and be separable from a vehicle license plate, the frame comprising:

a reflective medium attached to the frame, the reflective medium including indicia operable to reflect infrared illumination provided by an infrared light source, where portions of the infrared illumination reflected from the indicia comprise a reflected indicia image; and

graphic components formed of a material that is transmissive to the infrared illumination and the reflected indicia image, and non-transmissive to visible light, the graphic components ~~covering the reflective medium so as to concealing~~ the indicia from human eyesight.